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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 003488

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [ECON](#) [MARR](#) [IZ](#)  
SUBJECT: PRT NINEWA: KURDISH ENCROACHMENT: TRYING TO CHANGE  
FACTS ON THE GROUND IN NINEWA

REF: A. BAGHDAD 2827  
[1](#)B. BAGHDAD 3416

Classified By: Ninewa PRT Leader Jason Hyland for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

This is a Ninewa Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) message.

Summary  
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[1](#)1. (C/REL ACGU) Western Ninewa is one of the key disputed areas in the Article 140 debate. Recent Kurdish actions there, such as a KDP chief's order to remove 113 Arab families who have moved to the area since 2004, and the Ninewa Provincial Council's decision to move the Qahtaniya subdistrict (site of the massive August 14 Al Qaeda bombings) into the Kurdish-majority Sinjar region, are part of a steady Kurdish effort to create "conditions on the ground" for the eventual determination of the boundaries of the Kurdistan region. At the same time, Sunni Arab extremists, especially Al Qaeda, are seeking to exploit growing anger in the Arab community about what many view as the impending loss of significant portions of a province in which they are the majority (ref a). These tensions will likely continue to rise as the referendum on Article 140 moves closer.

Western Ninewa "Contested Area"  
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[1](#)2. (C/REL ACGU) Western Ninewa represents a major fault line between Kurdish and Arab communities, and is one of the key disputed areas in the Article 140 debate. A large pocket of Kurdish-speaking Yezidis (many in the village of Qahtaniya, the site of the August 14 bombings) are separated geographically from the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) by a swath of tribal Sunni Arab lands. The Yezidi leadership of Qahtaniya insisted to the PRT leader shortly after this year's bombings that they wished to attach their subdistrict to the KDP-controlled Sinjar district, since they believed they risked attacks by Al Qaeda by traveling through Arab-majority areas to their subdistrict headquarters. On October 10, the Ninewa Provincial Council (PC) called on the Government of Iraq (GOI) officially to place the sub-district of Qahtaniya, which is currently part of the Arab-dominated Bajj district, within the boundary of KDP-controlled Sinjar district. (Note: Of the 40 members of the Provincial Council, 31 are from the Kurdish Alliance. End note.)

KDP Orders Removal of Arab Families  
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¶3. (C/REL ACGU) Activities involving movement of Arab families or repositioning of Peshmerga forces in this area are major sticking points in ongoing provincial reconciliation negotiations between the KDP and the majority Sunni Arab Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP). In a letter dated October 1, Sarbast Terwanishi, Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) chief for the western region of Ninewa Province, instructed the mayor of Sinjar to use security forces, Iraqi Police (IP), Iraqi Army (IA) and Kurdish Assayesh intelligence service to "move out" as soon as possible 113 Arab families who have moved to the area since 2004. Many of the 113 families are located in disputed areas. Local KDP Chief Sarbast has been extremely active in identifying ways in which his party can extend its influence. His October 1 letter is the latest in such moves.

¶4. (C/REL ACGU) Khasro Goran, the powerful Provincial KDP Chairman and Ninewa Vice-Governor, initially expressed disbelief to the PRT over the letter, declaring that it was "unacceptable." Later, Khasro revised his statements, saying that the letter did not order anyone to do anything, but instead merely "suggested" that the security forces be used to "resolve the issue." (Comment: Sarbast has no government position; he is the KDP chapter chief and a retired Peshmerga Major General. However, as the KDP strong-man in Sinjar, Sarbast wields no small amount of power in the area; a "suggestion" from him involving the Assayesh could be seen as an order by the leadership in the area. End Comment.) BCT Commander delivered message directly to Sarbast that his actions were counterproductive. PRT Leader also engaged Khasro on October 10 about the situation in Sinjar, and will continue to follow up.

Comment

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¶5. (C/REL ACGU) No single action by either side is necessarily game-changing, but small activities could accumulate to create more tensions between Arabs and Kurds in Ninewa. Currently, the provincial IIP and KDP are both publicly faithful to the political process, with AQI committing the majority of the violence. However, the longer the Article 140 process remains murky and unresolved, the higher the chance of the Arab majority's deciding that action, rather than political dialogue, is necessary. Our Arab interlocutors stress that provincial elections and a delay in the implementation of Article 140 in Ninewa would help defuse these tensions and demonstrate to their public that they are part of a fair, democratic process.

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